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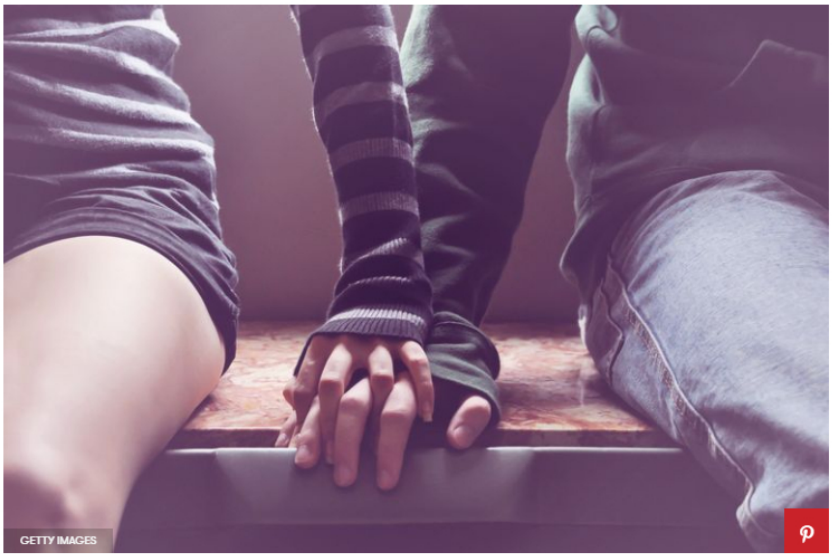
Am I Demisexual?

The more you know!

By Alison Caporimo Oct 2, 2018



For some people, crushing is a way of life. We all have those besties who are constantly talking about a new hottie they saw in class or a stranger on the street that gave them butterflies. These conversations can totally take over your lunch table, squad hangs, and even dominate the group text. But have you ever said to yourself, "Wow, WTF are they talking about?!"

If you've ever felt left out because you don't tend to experience crushes and attraction the way your friends do, you might be demisexual. According to The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN):

A demisexual is a person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone. It's more commonly seen in but by no means confined to romantic relationships. Nevertheless, this term does not mean that demisexuals have an incomplete or half-sexuality, nor does it mean that sexual attraction without emotional connection is required for a complete sexuality. In general, demisexuals are not sexually attracted to anyone of any gender; however, when a demisexual is emotionally connected to someone else (whether the feelings are romantic love or deep friendship), the demisexual experiences sexual attraction and desire, but only towards the specific partner or partners.

Demisexuality is within the asexuality spectrum. In case you're unfamiliar with asexuality, it's defined by AVEN as "someone who does not experience sexual

attraction."

At this point, you might be thinking: *OMG, how did I not know that these sexual orientations existed?!* Well, since our society is pretty heteronormative (or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality), it can be hard to know that there are other people out there who might be feeling the same way that you do.

And there are a lot of people who are totally in the same boat. Just search "demisexuality" on YouTube and you'll find tons of videos (like the one below) where people debunk myths and get real AF about their wonderful demi lives.

Here are some questions to ask yourself if you're thinking you might be demisexual:

For most demisexuals, the whole idea of get hot and bothered over a crush doesn't typically relate to them.

Demisexuals usually find themselves falling for a friend rather than someone they're set up with.

Since it can be really hard to tell if demisexuals are sexually attracted to someone, they may overthink their dates because they're searching for some clue that this person could be a potential romantic partner.

Crushes don't happen often for demisexuals, so when they start to feel one coming on, they sound the alarm!

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There's not a ton of information out there about demisexuality, which is why we wanted to do a deep dive into exploring this orientation. Here are some things to keep in mind if you're thinking this label works for you...

You might want to wait a long time before you make out with your crush.

According to Asexuality.org, there is "primary" sexual attraction — which is "based on instantly available information (such as someone's appearance or smell)" — and secondary sexual attraction, which comes from how you connect with someone. Demisexuals rely almost entirely on secondary attraction when it comes to relationships, which is why it might take a demisexual person longer to feel truly romantically interested in their partner. "It's more about heart connection rather a crotch connection," says Alexandra Katehakis, Ph.D., MFT, CST, CSAT, the founder and Clinical Director of Center for Healthy Sex in Los Angeles. This means that you may want to go on a lot of dates before you taking things to the next level, and that's ok!

Demisexuality has nothing to do with gender identity.

"Equal amounts of males and females identify as demisexual," says Katehakis. If you need a refresher, gender identity is "a person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender," and sexual orientation is "a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person," according to GLAAD.

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You can be straight, gay, or bi and also be demi.

That's right. You can identify as straight, gay or bi when it comes to your sexual attraction and also be demisexual. Think of it this way: Demisexuality is about how you want to go about a relationship (if that's something you're even interested in) and not about who you would want to be in a relationship with.

If you feel like you and your crush have real relationship potential, let them in on your demisexuality.

But you might not want to lead with the label itself. "The danger of a label is that people can go online, read some definitions, and make assumptions rather than talking specifically about who you are and what you feel comfortable with," says Katehakis. "It's ok to say, 'I really want to get to know people before I become physical with them.'" That way, your crush can know what to expect, and they're not left to their own devices when it comes to understanding your identity.

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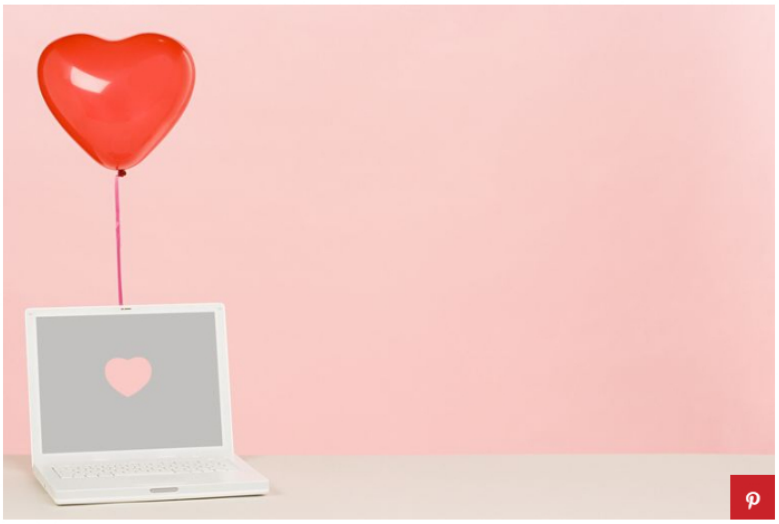
If you have already told someone that you're demisexual and it seems like they misunderstood you, just circle back with them. "If a person came back with assumptions, you can say, 'I appreciate you looking into this, but *this* is actually who I am." By being open and honest with someone you trust, you can find yourself with an even deeper emotional and romantic connection to them.

Online dating might not work for you.

Since your attraction depends more on someone's personality and your connection to them, swiping through Tinder may just mean a TON of first dates that lead you nowhere. "I think someone who is demisexual would have more success meeting people by joining clubs that interest them or getting involved in a community," Katehakis says. "They really benefit from getting to know people firsthand."



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You don't need to label yourself if you don't want to.

For some people, labels can be really affirming. They help put a name to a bunch of feelings that you thought only you had ever experienced. Labels can also help you find a community or build one yourself with people who can relate to you.

For others, however, labels can feel confining and reductive. Maybe you're not satisfied with the exact terms of the label, and while some things apply to you, others really don't.

If using a label feels good, then go on with your bad self and use it! And if using a label makes you cringe, it's totally ok to drop it and just define yourself the way that you feel most comfortable to the people you care about.

More people might identify as demisexual today because our culture has become so obsessed with hooking up.

"In the '40s and '50s, people used to go steady and really get to know each other before they became physical," says Katehakis. It wouldn't be considered out of the ordinary to wait months or even years before engaging in sexual activity with a partner.

But these days, that isn't totally the case. "What gets represented today is that people must have hot, sexual chemistry from the get-go and that that's the only way people are supposed to connect," she said. Of course, this isn't true. But it can

make a lot of people feel like they need to put a disclaimer on not being interested in hooking up super early on in the relationship.

You can totally be demisexual and have incredible, beautiful long-term relationships.

While it might take you some time to warm up to someone physically, once you become connected to them you're totally in it to win it. "I think one of the advantages of a long-term relationship is the friendship, since sex isn't the most important thing over time," says Katehakis. "It's the getting to know each other that can really build attraction to someone."

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You are not alone.

There's a big reason why the LGBTQIA+ acronym keeps growing, and that's because people are beginning to understand the complex fluidity of sexuality. The whole thing is just one big grey area, and it's totally your call to find the identity that best fits you.

If you want to talk to a professional about your sexual orientation (whatever that might be), you can learn about sex-positive therapists in your area at the American Association of Sexuality Educators Counselors & Therapists (AASECT). If you have a parent or guardian that you trust, you can also ask them to come with you on your first visit to make sure you're comfortable and are getting resources that work best for you.

ALISON CAPORIMO Digital Deputy Editor
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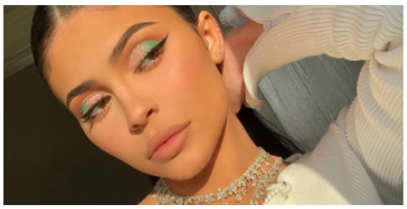

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